

Ideas for the World's Future

**A Collection of Cultural, Social
and Politically Themed
Articles by TaraElla**

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Chapter 1

New Ideals for the World

Start Moving Away from Hurt

How much hurt are we creating for ourselves?

You only have to watch the news to know.

Wars, terror, people making others lose, people putting down other people are all man made.

Why isn't finding a cure to all of this at the top of the international agenda yet? Is it too hard?

No, in fact it can begin in any individual, it's as easy as becoming conscious not to do those things from today.

Let's Inspire our Next Generation

Let's think of ways to inspire our next generation (and generations beyond that) to think of a better world for all and help achieve that dream. If our dream is going to have any way of succeeding, there must be people coming up who are equally as passionate about the dream who we can pass our torch onto.

When, for example, my generation reaches middle age two decades later, today's little children will be where we are now, and they will define youth culture. If they are educated from when young about diversity, the importance of equal opportunity, and the world as a family for all, then they would easily integrate these values with everyday life and the culture that they help create. Having this dream in their heads when they are growing up will also shield them from the harm of being 'mugged by

reality', something that has been quite a problem for many generations.

The Politics of Love

The politics of love are clearly going to be based on tolerance. If you love people, you accept them for who they are. You will be understanding in your worldview.

You also don't want to discriminate to make people's lives harder unnecessarily.

The politics of love are also based on forgiveness.

Nobody can say that they never make mistakes, and we don't want people to suffer for it by revenge. Rather, we try to help people not to make the same mistakes again.

However, the politics of love does not mean that we just sit by and let anything happen. For example, drunk attacks of violence that result in the intimidation of minorities and women in particular are something that we want to stop. This is the reason why promoting lifestyles that

prevent that from happening are just as important in the politics of love.

The Compassion-First Revolution

Conservatives have often taken to calling people advocating compassionate policies as 'bleeding hearts'. I rather dislike the term as it is meaningless - a bleeding heart is a medical emergency, not a political standpoint. I would like to introduce a new term, 'Compassion first people', to mean EXACTLY what the conservatives call bleeding hearts, without the meaningless terminology. And I announce, as of today, I am a Compassion First person.

I believe we need a Compassion First revolution in politics and culture. Too often the emotions of revenge and hate are allowed to affect our decision making, and it serves nobody. If, however, we decide to put compassion first when we think about what we should do, then we would likely serve the interests of more people. The 'bleeding heart', far from a negative stereotype, is just what the world needs, desperately, now.

The Perils of Unilateral Action

A article recently came out of Salon by Juan Cole with the title "Putin's war enablers: Bush and Cheney". What(?!), you may ask at first. But here is the point: Russia acted unilaterally rather than going through the U.N. Security Council.

The fact that the Bush administration did the same a few years back with Iraq makes that much more 'acceptable' in the international community, unfortunately.

Even back then I have raised an issue about the dangers of doing this. And it has come true.

Would people just learn the lesson now so that next time they try their best to stop their government from doing similar things again? Opting for unilateral action over international cooperation is bound to divide this world into shreds. International cooperation is the way to international peace and unity.

What is the Love Rules Way, and Why

The Love Rules way is simply to let the spirit of love and compassion rule the decisions you make in your life, and the views you take on things in life. It is as simple as that.

If you have love and compassion for everybody, on world issues you will stand on the side that gives everybody a fair and as happy as possible outcome.

When you look at situations, you will be understanding of the circumstances. You will hope that everyone is able to do their best in life. You will hope that the world will give everyone more chances to do what they can in life and be happy that way.

Looking closer to yourself, in your everyday life, you will forgive rather than take revenge. You will have sympathy for the disadvantaged and make friends with them. You will listen to the whole story before blaming or criticizing.

The Love Rules way allows us all to have a good life, I believe. It may not be the quickest way to earn cash or the quickest solutions to some tough problems, but in the long run, if everybody lives by this spirit, we will all feel loved and therefore feel warm, safe and secure.

Isn't that a better way to live? In my writings I will use everyday examples to talk about the Love Rules way and how it may apply to everyday life.

Love and the Individual

Our society likes to celebrate 'individual responsibility'.

We reward the successful with popularity and money, and many other benefits. However, is it just as easy for everybody? I guess you already know the answer.

I believe that, in terms of talent, we each have our own lot. As to if that talent gets put to use, a lot of factors dictate it. However, the love you received when you were young could have a great deal to do with your success. For example, parents who would help you do whatever you wished to excel in are probably important for success at an early age. This is just a plain hard fact, something that potential parents can learn.

But what about the rest of us? It is never too late to try and level the playing field. We should start by recognising what we are lacking. For example, did you parents stop you from pursuing a certain passion that was otherwise

destined to be your success? Did a lack of love lead to a loss of self confidence? When we realise what stands between us and the success that we would have had, it is a painful feeling. But let that pain drive your new ambition - an ambition to right that wrong, an ambition to treat yourself well before it is too late. You will then work very hard to try and achieve your dream.

The other side of the story is, of course, very disadvantaged individuals who have never had enough love to even have a chance at the playing field. Don't let the rhetoric of self responsibility fool you - these individuals do exist. We must, everyone of us, take it up as our responsibility to help these individuals improve their lot in life, by giving them the love that they need.

When you love the disadvantaged too, you will learn to stand on the compassionate side on the important issues in our world.

Love and World Issues

Most world issues can be solved with love, I believe. It is with love that we can end wars. And I do believe that, one day, all wars will come to an end, because people will realise the importance to love each other.

But even on more mundane issues, the spirit of love can give us a lot of guidance. For example, somebody who lives by the Love Rules way will support egalitarian measures when it comes to the economy. When you love the people around you enough, you will not just sit there and let them suffer from poverty = you will do what you can, even if it is just voting, to change things politically.

Policies that help disadvantaged minority groups are another place where love can guide us. For each group, just imagine you are instead one of them, with no way out, and how different would your life be. Suddenly, everything from affirmative action to anti

discrimination makes sense, doesn't it? Chapter 2 Why we are Missing some Love and What we can Do About It The Perfect Growing Up I want to talk about growing up in the Love Rules way.

First of all, I must say that I didn't have such a growing up myself either, so this is a bit theoretical. But it is backed by evidence too - individuals who grew up with a lot of love perform the best in life.

If you grew up knowing that there will always be people who love you and care for you, you will always feel a certain sense of security and therefore you will feel more at ease in life. You will also be in a better position to take up the hard challenges of life, because you know that, no matter what happens, there will be somebody who will look out for you. If you always had someone who was non judgmental and helpful to talk to when you were growing up, you would always feel that love was available.

Sounds like a comment on parenting? It probably is. But more importantly, knowing these facts is the first step to healing people like you and me, who haven't had the adequate upbringing. For it is never too late to find a family of friends who will complete the love-based family for you. Alternatively, many adult individuals who have not had that perfect growing up when they were young found that their siblings or parents became better listeners with time.

What is important to do, I believe, is to recognise your needs in this area, and to recreate these conditions for yourself right now. Even if you cannot find a loving family of friends to do it with each other, you should do it with yourself. Care for yourself well and allow yourself to go through the motions of healing when you are hurt.

You should also allow yourself to heal from wounds from the past that haven't been adequately healed yet.

If You Didn't Grow Up with the Love Rules Way
Don't feel bad, because most of us didn't. There was just too much pressure on our parents to 'teach us right' (the traditional tough way) for most of us to have a 100% Love based upbringing. Most of our parents were too afraid of making us wilful by fulfilling our wishes and making us reliant by giving us too much of a safety net. Now I say that all this is nonsense, but unfortunately much of the world, especially in days gone by, generally do not think this way.

But do beware that what your parents feared yesterday may have just got passed onto you. Now that you are grown up, you may be afraid of granting yourself your own dreams, or letting yourself treat yourself too well.

Which sounds like a load of nonsense, but it's true! We ourselves are often the very people who punish ourselves the most. It is a bad habit that we need to be mindful of, and kick away as soon as we recognise it trying to raise its ugly head.

You can Make it Better for Yourself and the World too

If your parents really were too afraid of making you wilful by fulfilling your wishes and making you reliant by giving you too much of a safety net, it is now up to you to change things for both yourself and the world actually.

You are now the one who can decide if you are going to entertain your own dreams or not. In my opinion, if you love yourself, and your dreams are good natured and compatible with the betterment of the world, then you should entertain them. Why let yourself be unfulfilled now and regretful later? But it is more than yourself that you can change. The world is being poisoned by the aforementioned ideology and millions of people are mistreating themselves and their kids just because of it. If you are strong enough to stand up to the pressure to conform to this toxic culture, then you would have made an example of yourself, one more

example for the world to see, one more small step to changing this toxic culture.

Moreover, if you boot the 'toughen them up' mentality from your mind, then you would be helping to create less of that culture in the world, somewhat like if you stick to environmental friendly machines you would help reduce emissions.

As We Evolve... (My Hopeful Story of the Human Race)

In the beginning we were primitive creatures, fighting for food and shelter.

Then we still had these struggles, but in a more civil way. It was at that time that religion and spirituality got introduced too.

Later on, we were awakened to better possibilities than to keep fighting each other - we began to be able to provide for ourselves, and began to be able to see that the fighting was damaging us and at times unnecessary.

Soon we began to think more and more about our condition. People from around the world came together, and although there were some clashes, they got resolved now that we see clear that we are in the same boat.

Finally, the fighting ceased, and we began to support each other through life's journey, and

thus we now had proper attention focused on the important things, like our spirituality.

End of War #1 - Why we can be so Near Now

Tribal societies have survived by fighting each other and gaining food over other tribes and other animals. That was probably how war began. In time, people began identifying in terms of new tribes - the nation state, religion and so forth. In the past 50 years, however, the tide has turned against war being a constant. We started to recognise that in modern civil society war is no longer a necessity, an unnecessary evil that killed too many young people.

Today people are even more global. It is already hard to pitch a nation against another, and it is becoming harder and harder to pitch religions against each other.

Some fringe elements are still fighting on these things, but the concept of global humanity is looming large and becoming more mainstream than these fighting elements in many places.

What is left is the final struggle - between the idea of a world accepting to all, where friendships last across diversity and decency and compassion are the first principles as we work towards a better future for all, versus those who want to maintain the old tribal way. Once Global Humanity and Decency prevail, war will come to an end and love and compassion will rule the world. Now that so many of us have seen the light, the day shall not be far. So work for it, by endorsing peace everywhere as much as possible, and by carrying this hope and fighting for decency and the right of everyone to enjoy a good life in all events. It will be more than worth the determination.

End of War #2 - A Way to Understanding

Wars happen because of conflict. A way to end conflict is by increasing understanding between people.

I think a good place to start is always to look at the common goals, before looking at why the differences exist. After all, all people want a good life, love, family and all religions and good philosophy want to free us from the illusions that is this world and achieve better things spiritually, something which I personally think is very important. Those people who favour new social models/institutions are usually not opposed to traditional social structures, they just want to expand them so their spirit can be brought to more people or brought more in line with modern living experiences.

Minor (or even major from some perspectives) disagreements on language should be, and can

be, solved, and this should be a way of moving forward.

Conflict also happens because there is not enough space for everyone to live well. It could be the scarcity of resources, especially in primitive societies, but it is often about cultural institutions not able to tolerate each other, and this is often the cause in advanced societies where resources are not that scarce. If we had more institutions that suited different kinds of people, institutions that celebrated diversity but are nonetheless roughly equal in standing, then we don't have to fight for control of the same institutions.

Instead, we can have a lot of institutions for different people, which bridge with each other in a smooth and mutually understanding way.

What can you do to help in this? You could help to create institutions that benefit your own associated communities in the first place, you are in a good position because you know them

best. The second, ethical thing to do is to help create good bridges between your community and the rest of the world, to communicate what your people are about so people can understand you better, and to strive for an equal standing for your people and institutions in the big place that is this world (without disrespecting others to have their own culture and institutions), so most people can understand your people, and fights between your people and others can be prevented.

End of War #3 - Looking at the Lifestyle Wars

The 'lifestyle wars' are some of the best gasoline that has been poured into the fire of war to keep it burning through history - to end the lifestyle wars would thus be important in bringing war to an end. Fortunately in the modern world most people are live-and-let-live when they are not themselves threatened, which means that lifestyle wars are often fringe. That said, they still have a great impact. For example, much of fundamentalist Islam's hate for the West is based on lifestyle - to some extent 'they hate our freedoms' is right indeed. From this, we can also see how evil and vitreous lifestyle wars can be.

So if most people today don't participate in lifestyle wars, who starts them? From my observations, it is usually those who are themselves the prejudice, hating type. The tactic often used is to justify their hatred by some logic, often elevated to holy levels through

unusual, often blatantly incorrect interpretations of religious texts, e.g. racism is justified because God wants the races to be separate, Gays are unnatural because they can't reproduce, etc. etc. Most of us know that this is all quite rubbish, because we know we can live a happy, moral and spiritual life without acknowledging any of this. (In fact I think taking up racism and homophobia and hurting minorities in a way that flies in the face of any standard of decency will certainly prevent a moral life!) What we need to do, however, is to firmly stand by the fact that we know this is rubbish, and secure the borders of our everyday life and culture against people who wish to promote any of these extremist ways.

Lifestyle wars are not started by us, the sane majority.

They are imported from the land of extremists and can spread like a virus causing people to be hurt and the morality of compassion to be seriously compromised.

We must be strong in our defense of our culture and everyday life against such plagues.

Why I am for Decriminalisation (of a lot of things)

I don't believe it is morally okay to do everything, really.

And some things are better done less too, for the good of all of us. However, I don't believe in being judgmental, for two reasons. One is that everyone of us will make mistakes in our lives and will need to be left alone to deal with them under a forgiving society, but the more important one is that - who are we to judge other people? Are we morally perfect individuals who know everything there has to be known? If we say it is okay to be judgmental on affairs of a personal nature, then we are granting society the right to be guardian of morality for all, which it is really incompetent in doing.

Punishing people is also not the best way to stop undesirable behaviour, and sometimes it is completely ineffective. Undesirable actions are

often a result of a wider syndrome in society that needs to be tackled, and punishment will just drive it underground.

What we can Do for Love - Stand Up, Despite Cultural Pressures

Cultural pressures serve to preserve the status quo, no matter if it's good or bad. So if you bow to cultural pressures a lot of the time, then even the bad status quo will be preserved. Clearly that means wars and hurt will go on and on.

However, going against cultural pressures is not that easy, even in today's relatively liberal world. Even though out there you are supposed to be able to act in almost any way you wish, not conforming to cultural expectations can still see you get in strife with family/loved ones, or lose face in the culture(s) that you grew up in and have learnt to love so much. But don't cave in because of this - you are not doing anyone good by caving in, even if it seems so. More people that you will get hurt if you cave in. And that applies not just to things like supporting an anti-war movement, things like failing to arguing for a more compassionate culture and even just a fair deal for yourself can have far-

reaching implications. So if you think something is not right, speak up.

I have found that by thinking about this it makes things a little easier: we are living in only a very small portion of history. It just happens that now, a chunk of your cultural group (or family) are stuck in the wrong place.

Do you want to 1) give up on them, 2) join them on the wrong road, or 3) be patient but firm with your stance, knowing that the current 'strife' is only very temporary in history? The choice is yours.

Don't Teach Your Child Evil

Much of what children know about evil is taught to them by adults. And it's easier than you think.

When you tell a child that the wars out there are 'reality we must face' rather than 'something we must change', when you expose your child to more bombings than dreams in the name of teaching them about the world, and when you slap them hard in the name of education thus teaching them that it is sometimes 'right' to deliberately hurt another, you are telling the child that it is okay to be evil at times. Even more than this, the modern pressures of childhood competition, without moderation by parents, can teach children the wrong lesson of acting evil to survive.

What we need is an antidote: to teach your child unconditional love from the word 'go', this is more important than any form of disciplining. Give all of your love and none of your venom to

the child, unconditionally. Let your child dream, and inspire them to dream. Then when they are exposed (naturally) to the world's brutality, teach them that this is something we must try to change and although one or two individuals can't change much, together we can, and together we will. This way they will develop the inner moral compass of compassion that will make them good citizens, who definitely won't go to do mass murder or terrorism.

As adults we have every responsibility to make sure our children don't learn evil before they learn good. The stake is our society's future!

Village in the Modern World What I mean by village is a group of people who care about the wellbeing of each other. It is a spirit that should exist in the family, in the community and among the whole world. It takes a village to raise a child, so goes the saying, and it also takes a village to do a lot of other things to support a whole person to lead a fulfilling, useful life too. There are periods in history that this has

worked (e.g. the community cohesion in middle of the 20th century in the west, leading to a period during the 60s-70s when reforms for a better world went ahead not blocked by cynicism like many projects today), and periods where this hasn't worked (e.g. when generation after generation grow up in war), and the results speak for themselves. In fact, the breakdown of this 'village' in the west since the 1980s is what I believe to be causing a generally high level of cynicism and anxiety out there.

Since the 1980s there were many alternatives to the universally loving and caring village, as the result of earlier revelation that the mid 20th century community, while fitting the majority of people, failed many outsiders. This revelation led to developments which have destroyed the village, unfortunately. Some have adopted the outsiders' lifestyles and given up on what they have seen as an old and patriarchal institution that offered no flexibility, only to find themselves still sad, and gradually these people

have turned cynical. Others have maintained that the 1950s version was the only 'successful' village and sought to maintain the whole model, alienating those it marginalised, only that this time they have been empowered and instead of silent submission there is open conflict, resulting in 'cultural wars' that have destroyed this village.

What we need to do now is to rebuild this village, and with the realisation of where it has failed minorities before or was limiting to personal development before, and address these to build an even better village. This will show both the cynics and the arch-conservatives they are wrong by finding the life that I believe they want to find too but were led on the wrong path to.

Everything from how we live our everyday lives (in how we associate with others - with open arms not cynicism) to the policies we support out there should be affected by this thought.

There are some little things in life that we can start right now and think of or practice every day to keep our minds on our ideals, as we work towards the great life for both ourselves and the world at large.

Rediscovering that Lost Village

The continued decline of family and village spirit has been damaging to our society, a lot of us would concede. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, and the harmful effects of this decline are already being seen. And despite a knowledge of that, it seems not much would work. Why? Here's one theory I can propose: That families and communities have been torn apart by difference of opinion. In days when the world was much simpler, these places were built on compassion, caring for each other. But now that the world is a place full of ideas from everywhere, those different ideas cause tension, dislike of certain ideas or ways of living have led to dislike of certain family members or community neighbours, and when this phenomenon becomes common, the whole institution falls apart.

So where did it go wrong, why can't we just talk about things with each other and accommodate each others' needs, understand each others'

ideas and enrich each other, like we have always had? My guess is that it started with dividers and haters - those who didn't like certain new ideas or ways of living and decided to declare war on them as if they were rogue regimes rather than simple measures designed to root out disadvantage, including but not limited to gender equality, anti-racism and anti-homophobia. They have always been around but since the great progress of the 1960s-70s they have especially been present, to the amount that is enough to bring down communities.

They think in a way that, if you belong to one of the groups they do not like, you are doing evil just by that. If you were 'infected' by this kind of thought, then it is not hard to imagine your 'opponent' as evil. And you wouldn't be able to live with that - thus the arguments and hurt.

So how can this be fixed? Haters demand that their 'opponent thought or lifestyle' be shut down so that peace can be restored. But isn't

that just like fascists demanding that we all convert to their choice of fundamentalism before terrorism will stop? The fact is that, your loved family is just driven into misunderstanding each other, once this misunderstanding subsides you will find that you are still each other, that you still love each other. Just like if we defeat terrorism both by security and aiding lovebased ideology, the world will become safe again, we don't need to mass convert to anything to be safe, we don't need to give up on societal progress for the loving family to prevail again, for that, just like yielding to terrorists, would defeat our purpose in protecting what we have already.

Take the first step by shutting out 'the arguments out there' and focusing for caring for each other - for politics is meaningless without loving communities, and politics without love is only that close to Fascism anyway. Immerse yourself in your loving relationships and try to listen to each other compassionately, as if there

were no movements out there, as if there is only you and your sometimes troubled family members, and their solutions to life. The family will return soon. And back 'home' you are now, you will also find that reactionaries don't really represent their religion they are talking about, possibly don't even know what they are talking about, and are just acting on old prejudices.

Build A Love Based Values based Culture

We need to come together based on shared values, not shared agenda. We need to live together and fight together based on a vision of the world, not just for the small items that we believe in individually.

In some periods in history, people fought for their self interests, and there were thousands of individual causes with no link between them. Each cause, while dedicated to the bettering of humanity, ended up battling each other over trivial issues of self interest. In the end, most causes failed.

In other periods in history, people fought together based on common dreams and values. Peace and the end of all wars is a dream that every person, no matter what their race, gender, creed or religion is can share.

Oppressed minorities including women, traditionally oppressed ethnic groups and

people of queer sexuality can all band up to fight for more chances in life for all people, and with such a base there can be really effective action, but only if the radical feminists do not end up man-bashing and the conservative elements of the ethnic minorities put down their traditional sexism and homophobia.

Our culture needs to be friendly and inviting to all. Our message needs to be easy to understand. While we need all that intellectual stuff to support us, they shouldn't be what the novice has to face. Just by declaring 'I am for a love-based world unconditionally, and I don't cling to old dogma at the expense of love' should be enough for entry into our club. Lots of people with great hearts are not intellectuals, and sadly, from my experience, a lot of intellectuals do not have hearts and passion as great as some of these less well informed people.

Although a movement towards a better world must necessarily be based on good information

about the injustices everyone is suffering from, it cannot be based on being well-informed about issues or being able to see the world in its entirety. Such a movement must be based on the sharing of loving values and the hope that they be applied to the whole world we are living in.

Stemming from this, we should be creating our movement not around books like this one, but around popular culture, ideas people can grasp easily, and let theory books like this one inspire it from afar instead.

We should do the actions for our movement where most people actually live and breathe - in the popular culture rather than the academia, for example. We also need to use simple, touching language, and cut out the jargon and the political correctness while we strive to maintain our politeness.

The culture of love should be a loving thing, not just a theoretical thing. Once people are in a

club or institution run under this culture, they should feel the culture of love all around them, rather than just hear empty words repeated over and over again all around them. The culture of love should affect our groups and the atmosphere in them, not just the work they do.

Are you Sure that you're not just Preaching to the Converted? No, we are not preaching to the converted. There is a time and place for doubting everything, but there should also be a time and place to reaffirm our most basic values that make us dreamers for a better world, and places where this love can be felt and these values are applied to everything in life consistently. This book is about that. It also contains ideas as to how we can do this more often in our lives.

The role of dissent in such a culture is also important.

We need to show disapproval of people who dissent against universal love, just like you

would show disapproval to somebody who is against freedom and democracy in a democratic society. But we do welcome dissent on how we should do things to make this world a better place. We learn from these intelligent arguments, and we also make sure that such arguments do not destroy our common bond.

Having said all that, the dangers of becoming insular need to be realized and prevented. I come from a conservative background and I am very aware of the dangers of insularism. Believe it or not, I was taught quite large amounts of racism, sexism and homophobia and used to take it as normal as a child - and have come to reject all of that rubbish as I grew up and got exposed to the rest of the world.

Groups that focus on small things tend to become insular, as well as those which focus solely on one culture or one vision of an idealised past. Unfortunately that accounts for too many groups in today's society. I think the best way to prevent insularism for any group or

individual is to continuously study the world, the good bits and the bad bits, and make sure we continue to do our important work to improve living conditions for more people. To do this consistently we need to work on basic values - in fact to make it an exercise to think about what you can do better with your love based values in every disappointing situation in the world you come across, rather than just sit there and get angry about it. Also, remember that working from highly specified dogma can only bring hate.

Where are the good people?

Love requires people with great hearts, not cynical people. People whose sole life goal is to find the next quick buck will not get our love culture movement anywhere.

But where are all these great people, if they exist? Certainly, my friends are all quite cynical people, so are my neighbours, relatives, co-workers and so on.

However, this is all due to the current fragmentation of the dream I mentioned earlier, plus the fact that we actually do face a lot of economic stress every day (most of us anyway). Once we get the unity back and the universal love brand back together, I believe this will change, and the world will change from there.

The other important thing to do is to reach out to people and win over hearts and minds. As touched on before, there have been periods where people have been persuaded to think outside of their self interests and think of how

we can come together to make this world a better place. It all starts with a conversation, one that starts in popular culture rather than the high towers of academia or the head offices of political parties. One important thing is to get the language and the attitude right. We can't get to people's hearts by asking them to memorise the Gay Allies' Dictionary or the Refugee Rights dictionary, learning every single bit of history and jargon that is in there, but we can do that with our brand of universal love, much like the fundies do with their 'basic beliefs'.

We already have an advantage here however - simply because of the progress of the last few decades, it is not very easy to tell people to give up all their current beliefs and embrace intolerance, but it is much easier to tell people to embrace a vision for a world of love. But we have not been using it - we have been preaching too much about petty facts that not everyone

has to know and too little about the concept of
love which unites all our actions.

We Need Everybody

There are different roles in a culture, and for the sake of richness we should embrace them all. No particular cultural stereotype or aesthetic should dominate the culture of love - every stereotype and aesthetic should be represented, save the hate-based ones e.g. Nazi armbands and uniforms.

Many cultures and movements have been about including or excluding people based on the aesthetic or lifestyle choices they have made. Most mainstream pop cultures from rock to trance to hip-hop are like this, and so are our opponents the haters, who exclude people who wear unconventional clothing, who are homosexual or are allies, who have certain spiritual activities and so on. It really looks like this is indeed one aspect of creating a cultural movement.

However, it does not work well for a movement that claims universal love and friendship and

the end of wars as its goals. You see, what a culture includes or excludes is ultimately reflective of its ideals. A world where hiphop rules (which I am scared of) will not have any pop music in it, and therefore the hip-hop aesthetic is exclusive of the bubble-gum pop style. Our opponents exclude racial minorities and queer people from their activities because they have a sick vision of a world where they and the people who live, think and look like them are the only ones who should matter. For us, the only people who should be excluded are the haters.

What everyone else has to bring to the table should be cherished, because that's how a love-based world should be. The unity lies in the fact that we all share one basic dream, remember.

We also need people of all temperaments to be involved in our culture because we want it to be a broad family. Different kinds of people speak to and listen to different parts of society, and all can enrich our movement. Intellectual to

larrikin, sober to party animal, we need everyone. Therefore, our movement should be made receptive to everyone.

Having more types of people in a movement also means that there are more talents, and a higher chance of success. One point that many liberal-minded people seem to have missed looking at the modern world is that the 'squeaky cleanness' of religious fundamentalists have led them to an advantage of having more thinkers and achievers per capita, and hence more formal influence (e.g. over governments, something that is often to the detriment of many of the minorities we are championing for). We definitely need squeaky clean people of our own, just not judgmental ones. I am quite in this category myself to some extent.

On the other hand their lack of party animals have meant that they are seen as boring nerds and are not welcome by large sections of the fun loving mainstream.

Due to this they have very little influence in the mainstream popular culture, and therefore in the end they aren't the ones dictating the direction of society after all (sigh of relief). This highlights the importance of our movement to have its share of party animals, because that's where we will reach out to most people, face it.

The anticonformists are often not popular with either formal institutions or the mainstream crowd, but they are just as important, as they are the engine that give us our ideas. The brand of the dream of universal love must therefore be palatable to anticonformists to take on board, it must not be beholden to certain cliches, or worse, dogma. Conversely, while these anticonformists may not like people who stick to a ready-made brand of culture. it is those who like to find a brand they like and stick to it who will most likely carry our brand forward.

Therefore, the brand of the dream of universal love should be one that is grounded in the

experiences of everyday life and usable in everyday life with real actions and beliefs, not just some intangible concept that is completely freestyled and alienating of less philosophical people.

Let There be Smiles, and Whinges too

Many people who want this world to be a loving place for all have a lot of grudges against the current state (including me). Who can blame us, after all, for sometimes hating a world that is full of war, persecution, inequality, hate, terrorism and so on? The enormity of the grudges have often made our people look like one big grudging group, alienating all the happy-go-lucky people that just want to have a bit of fun in this world. In fact, some years ago when I was one of these people, I used to almost dislike those 'annoying activists'.

The point is that, make sure that we are more optimistic than annoying. Make sure that happy-go-lucky ones hear that we are not serious freaks out to bother about nothing, rather people who want to extend the fun to more people who should deserve it. Therefore, the main messages of our movement should be on the 'dream of the better day' side rather

than the 'beware of doomsday looming' side. After all, the latter has always been the natural domain of progressives, the latter, the conservatives. Since when have we stolen that unpalatable ground that now even the conservatives have given up? Our shared aesthetics, music and the like should reflect this goal too. I am sorry that I am about to offend some music snobs right now, but this is an important point I must put across. While once again I welcome every kind of aesthetics to be represented in this movement (and indeed wish for that) I do believe that we should make sure there is a fair share of happiness involved in the culture we consume and produce. The music that is supposed to come out of the progressive movement, for example, is usually too bleak for me. Give me something with a beautiful sound and hopeful messages, that will keep me going through the rough times and make me work harder for a better world.

However, this doesn't mean that we should banish all whinging from our movement - only that it should not be the dominant thing. Whinging is not only part of a healthy life, it has its important function too. Only through letting people be heard over their oppression and disadvantage, and by hearing the message in all its pain, can we be inspired to change things.

Letting people whinge here or there, or even if they whinge a lot, does not necessary change the fact that overall our message is positive. Just think about someone who likes to whinge, but then when their blues for the day are over the switch over into happy mode for the rest of the day. They are still a happy person because this is their overall mood in life. They are just someone whose happiness is aided by a daily release of bad emotion, something we are bound to need living in such a stressful society. This is where our culture should be. Compare this to the person who whinges all day long, then gets three bottles down and goes to bed.

This is where our culture should definitely not be, I believe.

If you take only one message home, it should be this...

Be creative and do what is right. It is creativity that leads entire societies and peoples forward.

Okay, one more message - read opinions, think about them, respect them even if they are not your own. I know a lot of people in movements that are set to improve the world do not necessarily agree with what I have said. I know I don't speak for you, and I do respect you. Let me do my thing, and I will let you do yours, and this will leave us with a richer culture. This is the best way, isn't it?

Opening Borders for Love

In recent years, in the wake of terrorism, there has been talk of tough immigration laws to keep people up, often to the extent they semi promote xenophobia. This is, I think, really shameful for multicultural societies which pride themselves on being compassionate and accepting of all people who come in seek of a great community for all. Isn't this what separates us from those people who want to destroy us, isn't this what they want to destroy, and isn't it scary that so many of our politicians are helping these evil forces destroy such a great social concept? Rather than being a coward and shying away from the great values of being a welcoming and accepting society, we should celebrate them more. We should really allow more good people in and help them integrate, rather than make more rules to block people out. We should, however, back that up by making sure immigrants learn the values that make it possible for them to come to live as a

part of such a great society, like tolerance, peace, respect in diversity and so on, and make sure that they know that if they choose to stay and be citizens they need to accept these values by heart. And I think, in the end, we should be open to accepting anyone who is a good citizen and holds and lives these values, because that can only enhance a community that is already great!

Unite the Dream Forces Again

What we have today - a basic level of social security, basic decency towards minorities, gender near-equality in some situations - didn't come by easily, though we often take that for granted. And they weren't gained by each minority arguing for their own, in some 'I need to be just like you too' way. It was through the shared values of a large group of society that these things came by.

Minorities are very outnumbered and poor people have a lack of resources and power, by definition. So if everyone only cared about themselves, these people will definitely suffer, things like civil rights and social justice wouldn't have even taken off. Even with gender equality, on face value it represents only 50% of the population's interests, so again if everyone only cared for themselves the feminist movement would only have made this a divided world in constant civil war.

But back in the 1950s-70s history wasn't that way, or otherwise we wouldn't be here. Instead, everyone also fought for the rights of each other to a certain extent, with allies of every side joining in, so that the peace, social justice, womens rights and civil rights movements were really one - the movement to allow people an equal participation in life, the movement to let everyone be friends, the movement to make dreams come true for more.

This is the spirit we must rekindle. For only by working this spirit for all groups and issues, all the way to the end to the point when the dream has come true, to the point when we have reached the light, will everyone be able to live in a happy, satisfying world, and nobody will go to waste or suffer at the hands of society. Today some of the major focus is on immigrants, gay rights and religious people who don't believe in the past, who struggle against a conservative religious majority in order for real good way to prevail (count me in on this one). We must unite

all these groups - atheists who want equality should not attack the 'religious left', and we must think of policy in terms of 'if I were gay then...' or 'if I were an illegal immigrant then...'. It is also important to teach these lessons to those who have benefited - so that the failure of the 60s, where those helped by civil rights then have turned to side with the majority in prejudicing against today's disadvantaged, will not happen again.

And finally, please don't make it academic. This is a movement about compassion, love and dreams. We appeal to hearts not analysts.

'Academic progressivism' turns people away in droves and should only be allowed to play second fiddle to my great movement here.

Advice on 'Peer Pressure'

"Help! My friends think it is okay to laugh at an overweight girl just because this will help her slim down, but I think it is actually mean to do this. A lot of science has shown that being overweight is somehow to do with internal control, plus there are just too many factors in life that one can't control really." Isn't that a familiar story? And isn't there just too many justifications for cruelty out there? The truth is that, cruelty isn't something that should be tolerated at all, end of story. Advice to keep fit combined with compassionate and sincere help is not the same as teasing people, and the latter has an effect of undermining our compassionate society, a value that we must ALWAYS cherish deeply or hence we will lose.

So, no, it's not okay to bully people, and I don't want to hear anybody's excuses anyway.

What Politics can do, What it Cannot

Politics can do some things, but not everything.

We need to pay attention to politics and make our vote count. This is because we don't want a government that only favours one group (e.g. big business or people of particular beliefs).

Government is also essential to help 'adjust' the balance of the forces out there when the market forces fail to, so that everyone can have a fair go at things, so that everyone can have the maximum amount of freedom to do what is right by them.

Once upon a time, some people thought a good government was the solution to everything. But can a government, a bunch of 100-200 people, solve the problems of a whole nation, sometimes problems that they haven't even heard of before? Probably not. Thus we need a government that makes it possible for people to have the resources to solve the problems, a

government that is non-judgemental and treat everyone with equality and respect, but this in itself will not solve all the problems.

Voting at an election to make sure we get this kind of government is a must for every eligible citizen. But then we must move forward to do the next step. That is, to actively make the communities we associate with get a good deal out of this world, because we know them better than the rest of the world, and we can help make things better within these communities and make the bridges out better too. We also need to help everyone else out there who is disadvantaged too, so they can have basic human dignity, to have the space to do what is right by them, and to have a fair go at life. This is the dream, and if we all work on our part, we will get there.

Appeal to the Heart

"Elite" now implies stuffy, superior, arrogant -- and, most importantly, not one of us, wrote author Terrence McNally of AlterNet recently. It is a sad sentiment that is being repeated by 'intellectuals' around the world again and again. And yet they have no way around the 'problem'.

Well, here's my take. People don't like elites talking down to them using ideas that don't stem from their own life experiences. As I said here before, "when I was younger, I used to hate those people with all those 'quirky ideas' that pretend they can change the world, those people who would not like to listen to the music we love or watch the TV that we watch, or even dress the way we dress". I suspect that many people hate 'elites' for the same reason.

What would change that? If the 'elites' actually spoke to them in ways that they can connect with. We who spend time to study about the world and learn about why the 'elites' actually

do what they do end up appreciating them, but face it, 90% of the population will never do that, and so they continue to despise 'elites'.

Everyone needs to be able to talk to people without using theory other's can't understand unless they study for years on the topic, and are not remotely interested in, and adding that with a quirky presentation doesn't help either.

Instead we should put the 'theory stuff' in the back library, to be used when we need it, and appeal to the heart, to everyday lived experience instead.

You don't need to be poor to know why welfare is required. All you need to do is to feel those moments when you were helped along the way and were grateful for it. You don't need to be a refugee or illegal immigrant to know how unfair the system is. All you need to do is to feel those moments when you were excluded by more powerful groups from a proper life, that would have happened even in schoolyards

everywhere. You don't need to be gay to appreciate equal rights, you just need to think about the time when you were misunderstood and excluded from a fair treatment just because of who you are, when the whole world refused to listen and the injustice carried on. The examples are numerous.

And when the counter argument comes, just make these points stronger, and make more parallels with life until the audiences finally hear which is the way to go. Don't argue with fundamentalist interpretations of religious texts or the 'merits' of each policy. Don't deal with flimsy arguments that only serve to mask racism, sexism or homophobia, for you won't cure the disease. The heart way is the way to go!

Progressive Without Being Irrelevant

Here's something that I hate to share, but I must: when I was younger, I used to hate those people with all those 'quirky ideas' that pretend they can change the world, those people who would not like to listen to the music we love or watch the TV that we watch, or even dress the way we dress. I thought of them with high suspicion: they were weirdos who were out to destroy the world.

Looking back, it was actually these people who started to champion for the most important issues that are otherwise overlooked, including equal marriage rights, environmental protection, consumer rights, equal rights for ethnic minorities and refugee rights etc. So why did I dislike them, and why do so many still dislike them? May it be because they have lost the common touch? You see, for example while I report on ending racism, bringing about peace and gay rights in extensive ways here, more

than half of what is here is popular culture, and popular culture is almost always portrayed in a respectful light, as it should being the common discourse of people around the world. However, some reporters and commentators who carry the same topic will just rubbish news about celebrities and TV shows that people love, as if they are worth nothing. No wonder they have earned the title 'liberal elite'. It is a title that I never want to have, and I make sure that I do not earn it.

Therefore, I have made attempts to make sure what I say is relevant to the worlds of average people, rather than being hard to understand, quirky, or worse, condescending.

What Else Can We Do to Make Dreams Come True

As the common saying goes, you can't please everyone. There is also the 'economic reality' that there is only so much of the pie of resources available. However, there are many dreams that we can still satisfy without needing to bend these around.

There are many dreams out there that require only a change of the dogma to satisfy. Girls who want to play sports with the boys, for example. Gay and lesbian couples who want to get married. War-torn countries who just want the fighting to stop. Hurt people who are desperate for decent people to pop up and give them some love. None of these dreams cannot be satisfied without economic resources. They are all just a matter of heart.

My heart is all for making dreams come true, and this goes to the very values I hold dear and affect the decisions I make in everyday life.

How about you?

A Multiculturalism of Institutions

Different social institutions have suited different people, both from different ethnic cultural backgrounds and from different subcultures arising from the commonly shared conditions of people who may otherwise come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They have been instrumental in sustaining stable, long term relationships, the cornerstone to any great society. Therefore, we need to give them recognition, and all of them equally. We need to integrate the diverse elements of our society, rather than giving them the choice of assimilation or disenfranchisement, because there is high likelihood that many people will choose the latter and we will soon have a disenfranchised society ripe for criminal elements to rise up all over it.

The importance of the above point has been stressed over and over again in the management of indigenous people in many

countries, for example, but has not been extended to apply to all of society as a principle in many places. It is something that we would wish to support at every turn, and should be a standard part of multiculturalism.

Need to Reassert Tolerance and Multiculturalism

A study in Germany shows that there is persistent xenophobia amongst kids in German schools.

"Almost a third of all German schoolchildren agreed completely with the statement that there are too many foreigners in Germany.

Another third of those asked mostly agreed...

Almost a fifth of the 9th grade kids asked also had open prejudices against Islam and one out of every 13 admitted to committing a hate crime like spraying a swastika on a wall or damaging the property of foreigners." There are lessons we can learn in this story, and thoughts we can draw from them: 1) The tolerant kids are still the majority. We need to keep it this way, though.

2) The less tolerant kids are probably reacting out of some dissatisfaction. Like all life's

dissatisfactions, it can be cured by listening and trying to fix things. A culture which places emphasis on understanding and helping people is important for this.

3) The less tolerant kids will not come over entirely unless there is a culture shift to make them see how important it is to be tolerant.

Society is clearly facing roadblocks in terms of eliminating hate and animosity altogether and this needs to be addressed.

Chapter 2

A New Vision for Family Values, Consistent with Liberal Values and Inclusive of Conservatives

Family Values in a Liberal Context?

The traditional family is two parents, one of more children, and the extended family. We do have to acknowledge that its definition changes slightly across the world however.

It is true that not everybody wishes to live by this standard. Nor should anybody be forced to, as this is just another form of tyranny. But for those of us who want to, are we necessarily then in bed with the conservatives? The logical answer is, of course, no.

But then conservatives are trying to put out their vision at every chance to be the defining vision for tradition-based family values. If we stay silent then we may as well be accomplice to their homophobic, sexist and classist ways. If we allow this to happen, the so-called radicals will be right about us – selling out, trying to get into the system not to change it, not putting our liberal principles to use in society.

Therefore we need to create a vision of our own
and speak out, before it is too late.

Taking Back Family Values

We should take back the term 'family values'. Long abused by the far right, especially in the USA, 'family values' means things that work for the benefit of our families, and has nothing to do with religious fundamentalism or discrimination.

Supporting same-sex marriage is consistent with family values. It supports a same sex couple to stay together for longer, and provides a good backdrop for them to raise any children they may have between them.

Removing discrimination itself is also consistent with family values - we all have family members who are 'different' and are at risk of society's discrimination - we can only help them, and help them all, by removing all forms of discrimination.

Maintaining a living wage for everybody is also consistent with family values. People need to not have to work for 70 hours a week to provide for their family to be able to spend quality time with their family. Obviously, families function better when their financial stress is taken off them. Therefore, no matter how good the capitalist system may sound in terms of profits, it will remain a family-values bound social democrat.

A New Model of Family Relationships: With Liberty Comes Responsibility

We all want more liberty. Less intrusion from the government. Yet I believe this is only viable if we maintain ourselves as responsible people, striving towards that goal.

This applies more to the area of family relationships than anything. Couples wishing to stay together forever should work hard on it, and couples wishing to have an option of exit should make detailed plans. Joint custody of children should be worked out amongst the couple themselves out if a couple separates. Court orders to resolve matters should be left as a last resort, for example when there is abuse in the relationship. The community around the couple should support their goal, in whichever

direction they decide to take it, so that they don't end up needing that last resort.

The only way families and relationships can be free of government intrusion is if we don't invite it ourselves. And whenever we invite government intrusion, remember, liberty is lost.

Why I Ended My Support for Covenant Marriage

I used to support covenant marriage. As of 2011, not anymore.

I thought that an instrument to help couples stay together would be great. But then, I couldn't see the side effect of fostering dependence on the government. That's not so great. Besides, only a few jurisdictions have covenant marriage, and they aren't also marriage equality jurisdictions. This is extremely unlikely to change. A culture that is unequal and also depends on the government to maintain families intact is a dystopia indeed.

That's why I began opposing covenant marriage.

An All-Inclusive Pro-Commitment Movement

I am all for the idea that there should be more commitment between partners in society. I am all for the idea that we should have more stable families, and individuals should be more ready to sacrifice their own interests to achieve that. I want to have absolutely nothing to do with the right-wing 'marriage movement' in America, however. This is because it is all about bringing back the era of marriage-as-the-only-recognised commitment, and thus actually discouraging commitment itself amongst more progressive cultural circles (where I come from). And no, we are not about to convert to conservatism anytime soon.

What I would advocate for is a all-round pro-commitment movement. For example, we need to have marriage equality. On the other hand,

we need to set up domestic partnership or civil union registration systems for people who want to be committed and recognised as such, but not as a 'marriage'. We need to remember that, for many people, marriage is not 'done' until they have completed certain things, for example until they have visited their ancestral lands, and we need to respect that too. We need to have marital-neutral terms for commitment in society, so that all committed people, whether they identify as married, or possess a marriage certificate but do not want to identify as such in everyday life due to sympathy with the marriage boycott movement, or simply identify as another kind of domestic partner either temporarily or permanently, should be able to use.

I believe my suggested way would greatly enhance the culture of commitment.

The New Concept of Family

I have always supported the idea that family should include not just people that are immediately biologically linked, but also people who choose to be linked for life, and their next generations to be linked too. This practice actually goes back a long way in my culture, with Chinese men vowing to be brothers for life being a common practice in ancient China.

We used to take this pretty seriously in ancient China. I believe it's time that we start to take this more seriously, and formally - especially in an age where we are so lacking in permanent connections with other people.

This new concept of family can have other benefits too. For example, under current adoption practices, in many cultures adoptions can only take place if the relationship with the biological parents are severed. Therefore, you cannot become an extra mom/dad to a kid who

already has two parents. However, a new, 'biological plus chosen' based family can cater for this variation.

No bowing to dogmatists or fundamentalists

There should be no bowing to dogmatists or fundamentalists in doing what is potentially best for families - these people can live the life they like, and they can be sure that they will have the freedom and respect from us to do so.

However, they cannot breathe fear into all of our plans to move forward on a very important issue. Their 1950s styled manual for family is proving quite unsuitable for many others (expectedly), and our attempts at making change should not have to pander to their concerns, if the concerns are baseless (just like how gay marriage will supposedly undermine marriage - they can't tell us why, so why should we have to argue with them?).

Please Extend the Family to the Less Fortunate Ones

While we here sit here and talk about how we would like to build great, loving families of our own and turn the wider world into one too, we have to remember that many people are still struggling with misguided hate directed at them every day. In the worst case this can come from family members or close associates even, for example in the event somebody comes out as sexually diverse. Many families still don't have the idea that helping each other achieve their dreams is important, and instead are still trying to impose the traditional hierarchy's wishes on the less empowered members.

If we are serious about making this world into a great, loving family, we must try to reach out to these people, and make sure our efforts really get there. When one of them comes to us and ask for help, we must be able to extend it, and introduce them to the great family of anti-hate

people that is there waiting for them. Every little bit of work helps.

Alternative to Nuclearism: Why What is nuclearism and why don't we like it?

Nuclearism is putting the nuclear family up as the model family and that society should be built around it. Assertions that the nuclear family is necessarily the best building block for society are wrong, and you will see why as this project unfolds. We believe that while the family is the building block of society, the nuclear family has not fulfilled this role well at all.

The nuclear family partly or wholly is responsible for many of the woes of both traditionalists and progressives. When you come to think of it, because the nuclear family is much inferior to a bigger family in absorbing stress, high rates of separation, family trauma, abortions and intergenerational conflict is bound to happen.

Due to the low number of adults in each family, the structure of the nuclear family is more or less fixed and there are only so many roles there, and it is therefore less versatile than the big family. Models of the nuclear family therefore favour fixed, rigid roles. This rigidity is sometimes the reason for opposition to gay marriages, for example.

This is not to say that we don't like the nuclear family. We just believe that societies shouldn't be built on it. Societies should encourage big families whether through blood or friendship, and nuclear families should be encouraged to link together and function like big families. The big families, and different varieties of it, should be upheld as the ideal.

Making Love Last Longer

Something about the contemporary world around us right now is that it does not support loving couples enough. It's a culture thing, and only a change in culture will see love last longer.

Maybe the traditional 'extended family' model really should have a place in modern society, maybe not so much based on genetics as on permanent friendships. Just an idea here.

The Right to Self Determination

Article was written in 2008

We all know that the majority in the USA still do not approve of same-sex marriage, and especially in the south there is very little support for the idea. However, there is majority who supports people's privacy to do define their own lives without government interference.

We believe letting each person and each culture self-determine is a good thing, and agreeing to disagree is one of the best ways to peace. I have my ideas on what a good culture is, and I am dedicated to building an all-inclusive culture where everything is equal for everyone, but I equally respect conservatives who have their own idea of the definition of institutions (like marriage) as long as they don't persecute the minorities in their communities, and do not affect the freedom of our culture to exist and be treated equally under law. The biggest thing that stands between this ideal and practicing an

end to the bitter political struggles over personal and cultural values is power hungry politicians who want to affect every aspect of our everyday life and gain our votes for it. Stop feeding them and start feeding the Freedom Way! As the (now) old adage goes: Don't support gay marriages? Then don't have one! Nobody will force you to have one, or even recognise one, after all, in this world of freedom.

Celebrating Real Families, Overcoming Dogma

Some of Sweden's politicians have decided recently that they would support children being able to have more than two legal guardians.

This was fuelled by concern that today there are many families where children have more than two parents, such as families in which two same-sex couples have a common child together, and when the listed guardians die, the others cannot automatically fill in the gap.

According to the Left Party, this situation creates insecurity for the child.

We think this is a good example of letting love and what's actually best for the child's life rule over any formalities and rigid rules. It is reality that we have children with three guardians these days, and just refusing to acknowledge this fact is good for nobody indeed, except those who want to pretend that we all live in

'traditional' nuclear families. At least three guardians is much better than one!

Marriage Equality is Just Right To Do

Support for marriage equality, i.e. the equal recognition of heterosexual and same-sex marriages in law, is an idea that is gaining rapid support, and you know I have been a big supporter for some time now. However, today, let me reach out to the non-believers out there.

Firstly there are those who are opposed to gay couples having equal rights. In this are two groups: those who argue based on religious grounds, and those who argue based on the grounds of 'good policy'.

For those who oppose equality based on religion, can you be 100% sure that everything you believe about your religion is definitely true, and that you can guarantee that you have no gaps in your understanding? I certainly do not claim that for myself, and I doubt any mere mortal can. The reason why we, in Western

democracies, have 'secular' law the aims at giving a fair go for everyone and the maintenance of order rather than having religious laws that aim at fostering religious beliefs, is because we cannot ever agree on those beliefs, and we cannot be sure who is right ever. Allowing one group's beliefs dominate is dangerous, no matter how strong they are on their beliefs (just recall those churches that supported slavery during the US civil war). Therefore, the law can only stand on the side of 'fairness'. If there are people and religious groups out there that will recognise gay marriages, there can be no reason, on the grounds of belief alone, that their beliefs are treated with less respect by law.

And then there are those who say forcibly maintaining the heterosexual family is a good policy. That claim has not been substantiated by any research. A mere 'playing it on the safe side' is no excuse either, as the current structure of our (heterosexual) families are not actually

traditional, they are not in good shape either (think about the alarming rates of domestic violence and abortion), and if anything, the current situation favours a change.

Secondly, there are those who support the notion of equality, but really do not want to call it marriage. They include a large chunk of our 'centre-left' politicians, as well as quite a few gay and lesbian people themselves, believing that 1970s gay liberation will be forever destroyed (my belief is that those days are still yet to come, rather). I have to congratulate you on accepting equality in the first place. But do remember, what we are talking about here is a law that needs to be changed above everything else. Having two different acts of two different names for two different types of couples may deliver equality in terms of financial rights, but as a California court has ruled, it is 'equal but separate' and hence predisposes to enshrine inequality. And it can result in real, rather than theoretical, differences. One example is that a

future conservative administration may grant extra rights to marriage but not civil unions or domestic partnerships, thus reversing the equality easily. It is simply not good policy.

The law in question can be called the Marriage Act, the Civil Unions Act, or the Domestic Partnerships Act, but it should be one law for all couples. In fact, I am in favour of it being called the Domestic Partnerships Act instead, as it makes more sense nowadays, irritates less people (including those who don't want to call their union a marriage), and allows culture and religion to reclaim the title marriage, without all the political fights ruining it, and allowing different people with different views to believe differently (as a harmonious multicultural society should). However, as this does not seem to be a practical step in many countries within the next two decades. Therefore, in those places, let's instead go for a Civil Marriage Act that treats all couples fairly, and covers all

couples, lest a future rouge administration can reverse equality.

What's Wrong with Family Day?

We believe a 'family day' is a day for everyone to take time out from work and cherish our familial ties, enjoy quality time together. But apparently not everyone thinks so.

A recently added holiday in Ontario, Canada with this name has sparked concerns about the name promoting 'social conservatism'. Which I find sad, really. Spending quality time with your family is social conservatism? Is the world mad? This is positive family values in action, the perfect anti-dote to bigoted arguments on 'the family'! Leadership is for Everyone Indeed It seems that corporate thinkers are beginning to realise that one of the best ways to engage young workers is to cut the hierarchy and create leaders at every level.

It is what we have been doing and advocating here for some time. Indeed, to help everyone be some sort of leader on what they are strong

at is our goal. More people will get engaged to work their best for the world, and we will all benefit.

It is also good for everyone's health. Self actualisation is good for health, science has shown, a position that is also endorsed by the UN.

Village in the Modern World

From teenagers getting out of control to tragic deaths maybe involving drugs, the recent news all make us long for a world where there is more support for individuals in need. What we need is a new sense of village, I think.

What I mean by village is a group of people who care about the wellbeing of each other. It is a spirit that should exist in the family, in the community and among the whole world. It takes a village to raise a child, so goes the saying, and it also takes a village to do a lot of other things to support a whole person to lead a fulfilling, useful life too. There are periods in history that this has worked (e.g. the community cohesion in middle of the 20th century in the west, leading to a period during the 60s-70s when reforms for a better world went ahead not blocked by cynicism like many projects today), and periods where this hasn't

worked (e.g. when generation after generation grow up in war) , and the results speak for themselves.

In fact, the breakdown of this 'village' in the west since the 1980s is what I believe to be causing a generally high level of cynicism and anxiety out there.

Since the 1980s there were many alternatives to the universally loving and caring village, as the result of earlier revelation that the mid 20th century community, while fitting the majority of people, failed many outsiders. This revelation led to developments which have destroyed the village, unfortunately. Some have adopted the outsiders' lifestyles and given up on what they have seen as an old and patriarchal institution that offered no flexibility, only to find themselves still sad, and gradually these people have turned cynical. Others have maintained that the 1950s version was the only 'successful' village and sought to maintain the whole model, alienating those it marginalised, only that this

time they have been empowered and instead of silent submission there is open conflict, resulting in 'cultural wars' that have destroyed this village.

What we need to do now is to rebuild this village, and with the realisation of where it has failed minorities before or was limiting to personal development before, and address these to build an even better village. This will show both the cynics and the arch-conservatives they are wrong by finding the life that I believe they want to find too but were led on the wrong path to. Everything from how we live our everyday lives (in how we associate with others - with open arms not cynicism) to the policies we support out there should be affected by this thought.

Build that Family Around You

If you take time out from life and try to build a little 'family' of friends around you, one that holds true to the 'we are family' spirit and support each other well, you will be well rewarded in life. When you get into desperate situations and you need someone to talk to, you will have plenty of people available to you.

When you want to enjoy a special occasion in your life with people, that stranger on the street just won't understand you the way your little family will.

It takes the right attitude to build this family.

Accepting everyone (well, except for the bigots - racist, sexist and homophobic etc., you know what I mean, because letting them in is going to destroy it for everyone else) is a good starting point. Never mind if somebody is popular or deemed capable or not, because that is not a

good marker of a good friend, and if you resist pressures from the 'in-crowd' to favour them only, people will end up looking up to you. Always stand by a friend who has been injured by the insults from the mindless out there - one day we will defeat all these mindless people who don't know what they have been doing, but for now we need to stand by each other and be strong through the rain. And most of all, make time for special moments that celebrate the bonds between everyone of you - these will keep everyone through the rough times, which will come inevitably.

Chapter 3

Some Issues Requiring Our Attention

Public Education: With Some Communal Help

American activist Sandra Tsing Loh recently spoke out on how public education can be revived with some communal help. She talks of a culture of fear of public schools and relying on the services of private schools taking hold across America, and how communalism is the solution to reversing this. Basically, by helping out in the schools, we can break the fear, and we can also make the schools better too.

Isn't that the way to go for all public systems? And isn't that why public systems, if run right, are often superior to and more democratic than private ones? That was the vision when these services started. However, some time ago a culture of fear and privatizing that fear took hold.

Now is the time to shake that fear, and put back into those public systems. Before long, they will be up and running again, and who knows what crisis they can solve?

My Views on the Clean Living Movement

I have a love-hate relationship with the clean living 'movement' out there. I love it because they give me support and ideas on how to live, as I do. In mainstream media, there is too much sex, sleaze, intoxication and the like, and I knew clearly that I didn't want this kind of life when I was younger, as I know it would hurt me in the end.

And then I found the various bits of the 'clean living movement' out there. There was a culture that did not deal with casual sex, drugs and alcohol, and made sense for people who existed without these things. So it was for me, I guessed.

However, the deeper I dug, the more trouble I found. Obviously many parts of the movement (they actually do not act as one, I must say) are very healthy and are really intended to help

people out, kind of like the anti-smoking campaigns you find in school, others are not necessarily so. Some clean-lifers are quite judgmental and are not entirely compassionate. For example, those who insist a war on drugs must be the way out of the drug problem (I have touched on them before and will not elaborate here), or those who insist that only conventional lifestyles have any merit and that 'experimental' lifestyles are necessarily unhealthy. That of course clashed with my beliefs on freedom and empowerment.

And then there was this whole chunk of the movement that is linked to the conservative movement. Which means that some clean lifers have more objection to a porn reader than a government that has repeatedly waged unnecessary war. Which means that in the movement you may encounter people who don't believe in interfaith goodwill. And so on.

And because they form part of the clean living movement's audience, clean living media

generally aren't critical enough of these elements.

But wait! This was what not I was coming for. I came here to find commonality with people who lived outside intoxication and oversexualisation, not to find intolerant bigots and those who are willing to accommodate their wishes! Therefore, my independent thinking kicked in again, and I decided that while it is good reading about how other people go on about their lives in these ways, I need to be aware that I don't end up falling into the trap of normalising what they believe in, or worse, take their ideology on board! Since then, I have written my own things on clean living that is also used to power socially inclusive movements (like how you need sober brains to target those bigots) and have lived by those ideas. While I still like to read about how other people live life outside intoxication and oversexualisation, while my ideas are still inspired by their ideas in this area, I also make

sure that they do not represent too much of the things I see or the people I meet every day.

Somebody Needs to do Something About This

Many of today's young people have too many things facing them, and are often ill prepared to actually face the challenges of the real world as an adult. In today's complex, very interactive world, young people (especially those in the teenage age group) need to be more informed about the world around them and their choices.

Generations ago those choices were very limited, but now they have expanded so much that for young people to live a happy, healthy, safe and fulfilling life, help and information should be more forthcoming. This is a dream of mine, something that I want to see happen a lot more of .

Getting More People to Vote

Getting more people to enrol and vote at elections is a problem worldwide.

The reason why people aren't voting is because people don't see something in it for them. It is both because that people are not engaged enough in the world and cannot be motivated by the issues, or that the politicians are not putting out material worthy enough for people to consider spending part of a working day lining up in booths. Not that we don't have good issues at stake right now: being responsible about the environment, the future of Iraq, the future of world peace in general, equal rights for all people, in short, issues that may define the world as a decent place or a not so decent one. We are seeing some of the most important arguments being played out since the 1970s. So why don't people think that it is important to participate in the process? The real answer is

that, they don't think it matters. They don't think what they have to say anymore. Many have tuned out of the great debates of the world, and therefore don't even know enough about what's at stake to get active. We need to change that, or otherwise, no amount of persuasion is going to change the situation of widespread apathy .

On a better note, although there is still widespread apathy, more people are interested in issues than say, 10 years ago .

Maybe Iraq and the threat of terrorists, the rise of religious fundies and all that have woken us up. In other words, there is a change back to activism, albeit slowly. Do you want to be part of the change back to activism? Start by displaying your beliefs publicly, which you can do in various ways from the clothes (and accessories) you wear to just simply talking about important world issues in your everyday conversations. Everything in life is interconnected, and nothing is really too small

for small talk. Also, remember to learn more about emerging issues, so that you can make a stand on it, and help steer this world in the direction of decency and compassion towards everyone .

Politically Active?

I was reading a book about the future of feminism today, and in there was a quote which was something like 'what is it to be politically active nowadays anyway? To get stuck in a bar, speaking angry words while downing your wine?' That is a real insult to political activism, you may say. Unfortunately, that is what some politically active people do, and that's like all they do .

And the reason why quotes like this are popular is because many supposedly politically active people do not contribute much to the world, it seems .

To be politically active you need to do things, not just to know about things. And today you need to do more than just voting - political parties are driven by the change out there, and do not drive the change out there by themselves. Politically active people need to

make their views heard in some way. We all realise how small our voice actually is among all the people in the world, and even if your voice were as big as Oprah, you will still be a minute force compared to the whole of the opposition you're going to face. But think again, flipping that around, it is always millions of contributions that in the end make up the biggest voices .

Back to that quote. Making your views heard is an important thing, and an insult to this important activity is unjustified. But then, if you make your views known only to your close circle of friends, then it really does nothing much. You need to help spread them out too .

Better still, when you have a chance, act on them. It may be just as simple as displaying a bumper sticker on your car, or, if like me you don't own one, then stick a virtual bumper sticker up for something on your website. The visibility matters. Then if you have the time and resources, do something practical, and make

sure that people know it's in the name of whatever cause you are doing it for, so people can learn about the cause. That way, no matter how minute what you have said actually sounds in the grand scheme of things, you will have contributed. And it is millions of contributions that in the end make up the biggest voices .

Another perception is that 'politically active' is for radicals and academics. It is not. I am definitely not a radical - as defined by one who wants to forcefully tear up current social structures and replace them with something brutally new. I am just a very committed, uncompromising liberal. I am committed to being a liberal because there can only be empowerment only when people are free to be themselves, and that can only be supported by a structure that guarantees human rights, non discrimination, safety for all, and a healthy social democracy with strong safety nets that ensures everyone to have a life rather than just survive. And to campaign for this, I need to be

quite active. I am active because I believe in the dream of freedom and empowerment for all.

And, contrary to the popular opinion of many of my generation, freedom needs to be fought for to be kept alive.

In the Spirit of this Quote

Somewhere in the internet, I found this quote of former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin when he was in power in 2005.

"We're a nation of minorities and in a nation of minorities you don't cherry-pick rights." I think that applies to every minority person indeed – and that is every one of us because we are all minority in some way. We can fight oppression if we stick up for each other, or we can create internal divisions and make every one of us a lost cause. Remember, no matter how much you think you are better than the next person, there will always be somebody else who will think that they are better than you and you don't deserve respect. Only by believing in respect and freedom for all can we end this miserable 'food chain' and provide a good life for all, once and for all.

Therefore, no matter if I agree with that they do, I don't accept persecuting people or making them unequal. This applies even for people who do things I really can't agree with, like those who use mind altering drugs, those who do prostitution, those who live polyamorous lifestyles, those who believe in radfem philosophies, those who are deeply immersed in hip-hop culture, and so on. I will stick up for the right of these people to live without persecution even if I will never be in their situation. I shouldn't get to cherry-pick what I find acceptable in people and expect other people not to do the same to me and leave me in agony because of that. I will do that as a matter of principle consistently, even though my cultural views may not always agree with that. This is an important lesson in life I have learnt, and I will try to make more people learn.

No More Revenge Based Laws: Back to Decent and Effective Law Enforcement

'Law and order' is always a major election issue. But too often, the populist viewpoint taken up by both sides of politics is that there should be harsher penalties for crimes, as if all crimes were murder. But does it really help to lock people up 10 years for petty crime? If it does, certainly countries like the USA would be crime-free, especially the 'executions rule' South. But they don't appear to be any more crime-free than more 'lenient' places like Europe.

And why does crime happen in the first place - why don't you and I go and deal drugs and rob banks, but why do some people do so? It doesn't take an academic to answer this - people who are locked out of life too much commit crime, because have no other tool than this to get things for themselves, and because

they often don't understand why it is important to not commit crime. If these people had better access to an equal life, had a better chance to work for their dreams, I certainly believe they would choose the latter. That's why I would rather see shorter sentences in which these people are rehabilitated and also convictions being spent with the possibility for records expunged via a formal Pardons system within 5 years for all crimes except rape, murder, major fraud and terrorism. Getting these people back onto their destiny ASAP is the only way to stop them from re-offending.

And it is immoral to torture people like this too - petty criminals are people too. They are in the same boat as us, perhaps a more disadvantaged area. But it is the same boat, and on this boat we dream of sailing toward 'the light' which is a good community for all, and in this boat we treat each other like brothers and sisters.

Revenge is stupid when crimes often happen because of ignorance and delusion, most of us know, but how many of us actually practice it?

A New Approach to Anti-Discrimination

Anti-discrimination law (ADLs) can be a hassle, as seen in recent US House and Congress troubles over a bill that would protect people from employment discrimination. A lot of people don't like the fact that we are protecting some special groups of people not everyone likes. Truth is that, these people have always existed, but without modern visibility they are safer from hassle from people who don't like them. Now society has forever changed and brought us this new problem, and I think the best bet will be to bring the old coolness back. We definitely need some ADLs in this society, but I think a 'general ADL' would put out arguments about specific interest groups and stop shedding unwanted spotlight upon them.

Here is one general principle to anti-discrimination I am proposing: "People cannot

be discriminated for things that are unrelated to the relevant activity. For example, if the person can get the job done and is not being lazy or offensive, their race, gender, age, how they look, how they dress, AND ALL OTHER IRRELEVANT THINGS should not matter." This can be enshrined in law if needed, but even better, it should be enshrined as a social value. It doesn't matter if I don't like what someone does, mutual respect is the basis for an equal society.

Clean Living Requires Freedom, and thankfully we have more freedom

Some people seem to think that being permissive and encouraging clean living are two very different things. I, however, think that they share some common purpose.

Most of societies 'vices' (I'm not being judgmental, but just using the term my opponents on this matter are most likely to argue with) have something to do with a sense of life being not fulfilled. For example, people get drunk and use drugs to 'escape reality'. Which means that, the worse 'reality' is for people, the more likely they are to get drunk and use drugs. Many psychologists also believe that sexual excesses are also somewhat related to oppression. Some evidence for this is in how the queer community is now becoming more about family and less about sex.

Having a conformist, judgmental, controlling agenda that eliminates 'lifestyle choices' may lead to a higher percentage of people choosing a 'clean cut life' by statistics. That probably accounts for the fact that life was more clean-cut in the 1950s compared to now.

However, if we look closer, there is a more complex story. Mainstream people, those who are straight, those who are okay with society's assigned gender role for them, whose temperament suit their assigned 'place in life', those who are not discriminated against by the conformist agenda, can afford to conform easily, and are going to choose to be clean-cut when society does so. Because these people are in the majority, statistics are going to be dominated by them. However, bringing about majority clean-living through a demand of conformity comes at a great costs to the discriminated minorities. People whose temperament do not mix well with society's prescribed role for them will feel excluded. They

will be unfairly burdened. Because of this tension, they will rebel against society in time, and through the rebellion they will be labelled as even worse by society. They will never be able to live a clean life thus, and may even come to hate the very idea of 'clean living' in time because of the frustration. Because they are in the minority, the statistics don't tell their story.

However, the continuing existence of this underbelly means that a society based on conformity will never be able to be a fully clean living society, not to mention that it is intrinsically immoral to base the achievement of the majority on the excruciating pain of the minority.

Thus, we don't hear about the 1950s being crime free or problem free. Rather, the 1950s, for all its racism, sexism and homophobia, were somewhat more immoral than today, to say the truth.

A permissive, empowering culture reduces the feeling of unfulfillment in life and reduces the amount of tension one faces in life. In turn, this reduces the need to access those 'vices'. The trend toward being pro-family in queer communities in recent years is a very encouraging example of this. However, more mainstream communities will benefit from it too (typical people often find the need to drink away the day's problems too, unfortunately).

The onset of permissiveness often results first in an increased amount of 'vices', as seen in the 1960s-now.

This is partially because people who have always had that lifestyle are more free to admit to it. It is also due to the fact that before freedom and empowerment are totally achieved (which will take time, you can't deny that racism and homophobia still exists 40 years on), people will still turn to 'vices' for their unspoken sorrows, and taking advantage of the increased permissiveness to indulge in them

more. But once we get over this period, things will turn towards the better.

To shorten this painful period, we need to reform society towards freedom and empowerment at a quicker pace. Attempts at maintaining lifestyle control over what is acceptable people's private lives can only prolong this painful period. This is why there is actually a great future for clean living, but it is also tied with the future of healthy social freedom for all, and the end of discrimination on race, sex, sexuality, identity, and other matters.

Where the problem with Intoxication really is

Many members of our society have been quite unhappy with the way a lot of young people are binge drinking and doing drugs right now. Certainly it is not an easy issue to tackle either. I, out of all people, have been called 'conservative' for being generally not attracted to that kind of lifestyle. Clearly a lot of those people who live those lifestyles are quite easily offended. I think that can be accounted for the generally uncompassionate stance some members of the society have been to this problem - just blame them for wasting their lives and not look at why this is happening. Even the government is a bit like this sometimes.

I think we should focus on the real problem - why these young people should have no reason for hoping for better. If young people are shut out of participating in many things because they

don't have enough money, if they are shut out of opportunities just because they are seen as different, if they are turned off by the rules and structures of 'adult society' - many will lose hope of a better way. Humans inherently try to seek out their dreams, and when things get too hard, escapism becomes the choice for too many.

Of course the amount of 'encouragement' from certain avenues of the media towards this problem does not help. However, those 'bad influences' as some have called them have only grabbed attention because of a lack of other interesting things. You know why everybody focus on celebrity gossip nowadays? Are there any meaningful causes that really make a difference that celebrities promote and young people can actually feel excited about? The odd end-poverty concert may be good but there is no continuous campaign that can really capture people, unlike the ongoing dialogue of celebrity gossip. Other movements are doing even worse

- things like climate change and equal rights for all are put out as political issues with press releases rather than under a more important context of fighting for a better world. Towards the individual end of the spectrum, many young people don't feel that they can achieve their dreams either - to get into anything nowadays you have to be perfect (which is why people like William Hung is a good antidote sometimes), to grab hold of anything, even the right to live without discomfort can demand us to work like a slave, and unlike our parents in the 60s and 70s, we don't get to define culture anymore because of the monopoly of commercial media.

What a sad world it can be. Luckily, things are improving. Through the internet and other medium, young people are getting together and exploring better and more important things. Now it's mainstream culture's turn to catch up, to embrace this positive change, to make it even easier for young people to participate in life, and to give more space for young people to

develop their own world. 17-year-old entrepreneurs may just be a lucky few, but the rest of us can still do a lot of meaningful things if we have enough space. And on top of that we need a pro-dreams culture, we need to create one that competes with the negativity that has built up until now. Until that can be done, there is no use to blame people for escapism, even unhealthy forms of it.

Forget about Subprime, this is the Real Crisis

More and more people are moving back home to live with their parents in the bad economy - and not just people in their 20s.

Some will be quick to blame these 'parasites'.

But wait - what else can you do if you were in their situation - no job, no finances, no hope of ever owning a home in the present climate? Stop blaming people for their 'personal responsibility' and wake up to the national crisis! We should all pull together and think about this crisis. Bottom line is that, if people go through 12 years of school and 4 years of college and still end up like this, our society is wasting a lot of brilliant minds. And whilst some may blame the 'inevitability' of this as part of the economy, is that true? Common sense tells me it is NOT! Forget the 'subprime' and all that.

The fact that so many people are going to waste is the real crisis.

What we need to do is to start helping people go along more smoothly in life so that their potential can be realised. Governments have their part to play, so do everyday people. The first thing is to realise that it is unfair that some people are being wasted like this. The next is to do something about it. The latter won't be easy, but it's essential that we realise and start.

Lowering the Voting Age

I am all for lowering the voting age from 18 to 16. This has been my position consistently, from when I was below 16, right up until now, and I cannot see any reason for me to change it. Frankly, I don't see why 16 year olds should not be able to vote. 16 year olds are often political (I was), and are mature enough to cast a vote for the future of the nation. In fact, increasing the pool of young voters by doing this will certainly shift the political focus more towards the future, as young people are more likely to care about the future and accept the new ideas like tolerance and equality. This will become especially important as the population ages through time due to shrinking birth rates (something that I find sad personally and therefore recommend that every couple have at least 3 children if they can, but something that we must face up to for now).

I am willing to support this even if it means that other things I support (like raising the drinking age from 18 to 21 in those places where it hasn't been done so yet) go out the window. Lowering the voting age is an issue of ultimate importance to me.

Why I am Opposed to Fundamentalism

Religion has been used for divisive purposes. Like it or not, that is fact. But this need not be the case. It is often said that those who read religious texts with an understanding of what they really mean end up as better people whose faith make them treat everybody around them with loving compassion. On the other hand, those who read religious texts without thinking and take the literal meaning of everything end up creating the divisiveness. And I think this is not a wrong thing to say too.

Think about this. Religious texts often carry the stories and myths of many centuries ago. The best way to illustrate things to people is by telling it via stories they can understand. Therefore, most texts written in a particular era designed for readers of a particular era will have in them the context of that particular era.

Therefore, most texts that originate from many centuries ago are full of racism, sexism, homophobia, even disability discrimination and exclusion of people from other religious backgrounds, sects and castes. The fact that this context exists does not mean that it is the lesson that scripture readers should take.

The ongoing division has hurt many people. Most think of things like losses to the gay rights movement when they talk about the adverse effects of so-called fundamentalism. However, I am worried about fundamentalism for another, much more important reason (even when compared to the welfare of gay families): that of exclusion and condemnation of people of other races and religious backgrounds. It is this that leads to interfaith violence (an oxymoron in itself, I believe), and it is this that leads to people shutting their ears from great teachers from other cultures and traditions.

It is for this reason mainly, rather than contemporary fights like gay rights and the like,

that I am opposed to religious fundamentalism of any kind. I may be an advocate of gay rights, but my opposition to fundamentalism does not have much to do with that, in fact, it predates my joining of that fight.

Religious belief is good, but not enough, to deter evil politics

Many very religious people have pointed out that many of the world's worst dictators of the 20th century were atheists or anti-religious. The most famous of them would be Hitler, I guess. He was so evil that no matter which part of the political spectrum you identify with, you are bound to have the uttermost disgust for his actions.

That's why we should have leaders who answer to a higher being, some say.

But while that may prevent the hubris and the immorality behind acts like Hitler's, it is not guaranteed to do so. For while there are people who believe that their religion prevents them from hating, discriminating and killing, there are others who believe that their religion allows them to discriminate against 'infidels' (or even attempt to wipe them out), call great teachers

of other traditions 'agents of evil' (I shudder to hear such disrespect), and disrespect cultures that are not their own. If a powerful leader had any of these ideas in their mind, how would you think they would operate in their policies? Therefore, it is not just the presence of a belief that one is answerable to a higher law that matters, the other qualities of that belief must also be examined.

'Secularism' guarantees Freedom of Religion, at least when not taken to the extreme

Religious people in America are often said to be scared of 'the march of secularism'. But what do they have to fear, I want to know? Secularism is something that I support personally. And I have religious belief myself too (I am a Buddhist).

Secularism does not mean that you cannot practise your religion at all. It only means that the government should not make any law that particularly advantages or disadvantages certain religions.

For example, in a secular society you can still broadcast your beliefs about abortion. A secular society does not preclude an attitude against abortion and a belief in life beginning before birth. All you need to do is to persuade other parties to believe it. Of course, you cannot use

your own religious doctrine to persuade everybody. Just as in a democracy your interests cannot always prevail, in a secular society your religion's decisions cannot always prevail. But that applies to everybody's religion and denomination too - so it's only fair, isn't it? What a secular society guarantees is that one religious group cannot dominate over others. Which is a good thing because, although you may say your religion is the one, so do almost everyone on this planet. Who can we trust then? Or maybe, (as in the more likely case I think), we are all wrong indeed, as we as mere mortals are by definition not capable of completely understanding higher being(s) (as most cultures agree).

Therefore, the best thing for a government to do is to make no law that affects religion at all, as is the situation in most Western democracies. Otherwise it would be government as God, the institution we pay tax to committing a form of blasphemy! On the

same rule, whilst I do respect an ongoing debate about abortion, I cannot have the same respect for a debate about whether the government should legally recognise same-sex marriage. For same-sex marriage is already practised by a number of religious groups, and if the government refuses to recognise them based on the beliefs of other religious groups, that is making a law favouring one religious group over another, which is wrong.

The Lesson of America's Founding Fathers: Freedom is Religious

We all know that America's Founding Fathers were religious people. However, we can see that the constitution they set up clearly mandates that the government shall not make any law regarding religion.

Thus, a team of religious people were keen to make sure the country they were founding would not have a government that was tied to religion. Across the Atlantic in France, ever since the revolution they have maintained a fiercely secular state, even though the French themselves are well known as pious Catholics.

Their logic is lost in today's world, it seems. It seems that religious people, of all religions and denominations, are now called upon to make

sure that their version of theology and doctrine is the one that is reflected in law.

Thus those advocating a fiercely secular government are seen as having a lack of religiosity.

But really? How many versions of religions and doctrines are there in this society? And yes, you are sure that the one you hold is right. But so did everyone in the past think so. What makes you, another mere mortal, more capable of understanding the truth than another? Claiming so is only hubris, and it is only appropriate to humbly accept that each of us can only do our best when on this Earth in understanding the truth, walking the path of the truth, and adhering to the morals that we believe in.

Therefore, requiring that your version of the truth be legislated as law even at the opposition of many other groups who believe otherwise is only hubris and, trust me, you will get something really, really wrong in the process, and you will be the one who will bear the

responsibility of this wrongdoing. Can you, a mere mortal, bear this responsibility?

Government getting its hand off religion is the best thing it can do to respect religion, and to reflect the humility of us mere mortals that should be expected of us.

Therefore, government should not bend to ANY religious doctrine, be it the majority's or minority's view. Rather, it should do its best in making us live peacefully together, and leave matters of personal conscience at that.

Therefore, I cannot morally support opposing legal gay marriage (doing so is justified on a specific version of a specific theology, even if it is a popular one), and I cannot morally support persecuting people who provide euthanasia in their best conscience and with full consent even if I may not believe in providing it (that is putting one's own moral position over another's). I do believe abortion is, at least usually, wrong, and I support a debate in this matter. However, (not just because I don't

believe it's not time yet to make laws about abortion due to social circumstances), I cannot morally support or even put myself amongst those who have the same belief, but use their own specific version of a specific theology to justify it and demand to make it law. Instead if you are so passionate about this issue, why don't you think of ways we can reduce the incidence of abortion without invoking the law? I believe I am at least doing a part by supporting a better welfare and healthcare system for all. Going back to my previous point, no, I cannot stand to be amongst those who are comfortable to force their own theology down other people's throats. Therefore, you won't see me joining any 'religion based anti-abortion rally' anytime soon, despite my position on the matter.

Why the Fundamentalists Can and Should be Resisted

The fundamentalists often say that what they say are the absolute and eternal truth, and any deviation from their beliefs would result in eternal hell.

Are you afraid that you might end up in eternal hell because you are not a fundamentalist yourself, upon hearing this? I bet some of you are - to a certain extent.

A minority of people will soak up this fear and therefore convert to fundamentalism.

But is there any logic in this, anyway? Anyone can say anything, but it doesn't make it true. Anyone can say that they have the absolute and eternal truth, and everyone who believes differently will go to eternal hell.

That doesn't make it any truer than, say, anybody who doesn't own an iPod will go to hell.

Further proof that fundamentalism is not logical at all - there are so many kinds of fundamentalisms, each saying that you will go to hell if you don't believe in them, that if fundamentalism is true there is a high chance that we will all end up in hell, as the chance you will choose the real, right brand of fundamentalism is minimal, and belief otherwise is delusive.

The truth is that, I bet you will not be able to find the one true path to eternal life that is perfect on this earth in this day and age - we are hundreds of years from all the time when any of the major enlightened beings that people believe in were on this Earth, that all received wisdom has to have become corrupted to some extent anyway. Thus we can only try our best to give our hearts and souls to the great deity or deities (depending on your cultural background,

I don't believe that matters actually) out there, and strive to live the best life that we understand from what we know. We will definitely make errors on that however, some big and some small, and there is no way to prevent that. Fundamentalism's promise that you will make no error in your path towards eternal life if you believe them is just impossible.

Respecting Masculine Culture without Allowing its Dominance

I respect masculine culture, and I like men who embrace it, even if it is not my thing. I believe it is being curbed too much in the name of feminism these days, and in the name of political correctness, and this is wrong.

However, on the other hand, masculine culture is still being employed to judge all men in a sexist way that is so 1950s really. For example, boys are expected to toughen up when they are young in some cultural circles, without making exception for clearly femininely inclined boys. Grown men in some cultural circles are not allowed to be emotional, even if they are inclined that way. This has changed in more liberal cultural circles, and I am sorry to say that the rest of the world needs to follow.

I guess masculinity should be respected and left alone of feminist intrusion, but should not be allowed to be made compulsory for all men. And amongst these two issues, the latter would be more important in my belief.

Let's Pay Stay-at-home Moms an Allowance

Feminists just have to face this - a significant proportion of mothers would love to be stay-at-home moms. And there's not a problem with this choice - it's because of their nature, and it's a very legitimate choice.

Some have raised concerns about this making them dependent on men. I say, it doesn't have to be this way. The government can pay stay-at-home moms an allowance to allow them to be financially independent, in lieu of childcare services. This should also apply to single moms. While we are at it, let's extend it to home dads too.

The Welfare State

I support the welfare state. I heartily support universal health care, and hope that the US will get it ASAP. For these positions I have been called a socialist. The more accurate term for my economic position is social democrat rather than socialist, really, and I am proud of it.

Pure capitalism has illiberal consequences, you see. In pure capitalism, people are only able to live reasonably well and have a reasonable range of lifestyle choices if they have enough money. And to have enough money, you may need to work like a slave. Therefore, the less well off (the majority of society) are never truly free in a pure capitalist system. Therefore, pure capitalism is incompatible with liberty.

Pure capitalism is also incompatible with being family friendly. If our children are to grow up well, their parents need a living wage. If adult children are to take care of their elderly

parents, they need to be on a living wage. Poor people in highly capitalistic societies have been known to abort fetuses because they can't afford to have another child - how sad.

Therefore, my conscience does not allow me to be a pure capitalist, nor condone any society run in that manner. In fact, if the only choices I had were pure capitalism or pure socialism (the European kind not the communist kind), I would have to choose the latter, because of my moral convictions. But knowing that the market economy does have its positives, and my libertarian principles telling me that if we can achieve the same results with less government intervention then we should do that, I end up in a social democrat (centre-left) position.

The Morality of Taxes: A Discussion

Some libertarians believe that government taxation is anti-freedom and the equivalent of robbery. I happen to not believe in this entirely, and I have my own reasons.

In a market economy, anybody who earns a decent income is earning it from society, by rendering their services to society. If a healthy society does not exist, they will quickly lose their market. For example, in a civil war affected country most industries go out of business. In a state where the government does not invest in infrastructure, the potential for businesses to grow is limited. Therefore, requiring those who have benefited from a well run society to pay back to that society from what they have earned is just, as long as it is not at an unreasonable level (like taking 98% of your income).

To highlight the fact that taxes are a fair exchange of benefit, I would like to further advocate that the government provide an option where a citizen can opt out of taxes, but will not be able to use any government-sponsored service like most of the infrastructure that has been set up in society. I guess very few will select that option.

Now, you may argue that whilst taxation that goes to infrastructure, security and defence may be fair, taxation that goes to welfare for the poor is not. However, I should point out that giving everybody a living wage and adequate healthcare is the cornerstone of supporting a healthy society. A society that has a big underclass will soon evolve into a society with civil unrest. Likewise, a more educated and informed populace is more receptive to different personal and interpersonal needs, and will provide a good market for many types of services. You really cannot say that profit making businesses do not benefit from this

work that the government is doing. This work is not socialism, it is just part of providing a good infrastructure and human capital that benefits everyone, businesses included.

I do, however, believe that some forms of taxation is not fair. The inheritance tax, for example, has no ethical basis. The wishes of the passed person to pass their wealth onto anybody else is entirely their own decision, and it is a disrespect of the dead to tax what they have left behind.

Support for Limiting the Number of Working Hours

I support legislating to discourage employers from getting employees to work too many hours. Not a ridiculously low number like 35 - but we don't want to live in a nation full of people who work 65 hour weeks every week. Not in the 2010s. There are two reasons to this. And it has something to do with the recent advent of female equality too.

The first, obvious one is that it damages a family to have both parents work at that rate. Even with one parent working a 60-70 hour week on a long term basis and another parent working the usual 40 hours, you have got a lot of stress. In the past people (men) were able to work that many hours because they did not have to care for the family. Now that both men and women are working, both need to take enough time to care for their families too.

The other reason is that companies will usually only employ more people if there was a need to. A law limiting the number of working hours means that companies will have to employ more people to complete their work, rather than just paying overtime to a smaller number of employees. This may not cost the company more really, but it does create employment for more people. And this is very important, especially in times of economic downturn.